

Lake Michigan Fisheries Team

**July 15-16, 2004
Sturgeon Bay Service Center**

Draft Notes

Next Meeting: December 2, 2004 at Lakeshore Technical College, Cleveland, WI.

Present: Matt Coffaro, Brad Eggold, Lee Meyers, Mark Opgenorth, Kevin Kapuscinski, Steve Hogler, Doug Rossberg, Paul Peeters, Bill Horns, Mike Toneys, Justine Hasz, George Boronow, Mike Kitt, Tim Kroeft, John Janssen, Mike Neal, Shaili Pfeiffer.

1. Brief updates

Time was allowed for short updates and reminders of topics of interest. The following were mentioned.

- Welcome Kevin Kapuscinski
- Lake Michigan yellow perch (2004 sampling, NRB action on FH-10-04)
- Commercial rules re-write and electronic reporting pilot
- Strawberry Creek
- Asian Carp barrier on Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal
- Trap net regulations
- Status of lakewide stocking quotas
- Status of hiring new boat captain
- Wind energy development
- Spotted muskies
 - Justine Hasz and Kevin Kapuscinski will 1) review and formalize plans and 2) communicate with Mark Holeý our needs for FRO assistance with obtaining fertile eggs from outside the state.
- DNR/FWS coordination meeting
- Mass marking initiative

2. Sturgeon

Background (from agenda). The Lake Michigan Committee's Lake Sturgeon Task Group convened a meeting of its "Genetic conservation, propagation, and stocking work group" to develop recommendations for consideration by the Task Group and possible inclusion in a Lake Michigan Lake Sturgeon Rehabilitation Plan. The meeting was well attended by some high profile geneticists and others, including Steve Fafjer, Brad Eggold, and Ron Bruch. The work group will not have a final report for some time. At the meeting there was some discussion of streamside rearing to maximize the chances of imprinting and thereby a) help allay concerns of those who fear that stocked fish will stray and harm remnant populations and b) increase the likelihood that stocked fish will return to the streams targeted for restoration. Funding through the Great Lakes Fisheries Trust or the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act may be available to support streamside rearing on the Milwaukee and/or Manitowoc Rivers.

Action. Brad Eggold discussed the work of the Lake Sturgeon Task Group, including a summary of a recent meeting of the steering committee. The LMFT agreed to pursue funding for stream-side rearing facilities on the Milwaukee and Manitowoc Rivers. Concern was expressed about the need to cover not just capital costs, but also operational and maintenance costs, including manpower. Bill Horns will draft a letter for consideration by Mike Staggs, from Mike to the other Lake Michigan fish chiefs. The letter will state (among other things) that a) we will be seeking external funding for

stream-side facilities and b) we plan to go ahead in 2004 as planned with stocking of fall fingerlings in the Milwaukee, but hope that it will be possible in future years to carry the restoration program forward using the stream-side reared fish.

3. Power plants

Background (from agenda). Brad Eggold and Steve Hogler have been involved with power plant re-licensing issues at Oak Creek and Point Beach.

Action. Discussion item.

4. Cladophora

Background (from agenda). Cladophora has become a concern in some areas along the Lake Michigan shore. The primary public concern has been that the algae wash up on shore where they rot and stink. Sue Marcquenski has hypothesized that by creating anoxic habitats where zebra mussels are also present the cladophora may possibly contribute to outbreaks of Type E botulism. Doug Rossberg and others were involved in some early discussions about the cladophora issue. More recently a task group led by Shaili Pfeiffer was established and asked to review the situation. Doug has agreed to be attend and share his perspective on the issue. Shaili also kindly offered to bring us up to date on the activities and plans of her task group.

Action. Discussion item. Doug Rossberg reviewed the history of the issue, noting that as this has developed there have been three separate issues involved directly or indirectly in past conversations – 1) release of manure into the Manitowoc system, 2) cladophora fouling shore areas, and 3) e-coli. Shaili Pfeiffer discussed the work of her cladophora team and distributed a written issue brief. Although cladophora is of interest to sport and commercial fishers, the group did not see the need for LMFT involvement in the issue at this time.

5. Smallmouth bass and round gobies

Background (from agenda). In June I forwarded to the core group a paper by Steinhart et al that suggested that in the presence of round gobies fishing for smallmouth bass could sufficiently interfere with nest guarding to have an impact on recruitment. John Janssen had earlier shown a video that he and Tim Kroeft had prepared illustrating the potential problem.

Action. Discussion item. Tim Kroeft summarized some recent data pertaining to the abundance of small mouth bass and impacts of gobies. Mike Toney suggested the following approach and timetable, which was agreeable to the Team: 1) Public meetings in the fall of 2004 to inform people about the issue and share biological data. 2) Development of an interactive web page where people could record their ideas and thoughts about the issue. 3) Consideration in 2005 of specific rule change proposals for possible inclusion in the 2006 spring hearings. It was also suggested that consideration of this issue by the Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum would be helpful.

6. Northern pike

Background (from agenda). Mike Neal has raised concerns about continued snagging of northern pike in Green Bay tributaries, and suggested rule changes to provide additional protection to spawning northern pike.

Action. Discussion item. The Team seemed agreeable to a rule change that would extend the present Green Bay rules to Lake Michigan tributaries. In other words, a rule change that would prohibit the harvest of northern pike during spring (early March – early May) from all Lake Michigan tributaries except named large ones where northern snagging is not a concern. The Team did not formally endorse the rule, but suggested that Mike draft it as a rule change proposal that the LMFT could review and consider endorsing.

7. Lake trout

Background (from agenda). The Lake Michigan Committee's Lake Trout Task Group met in "executive session" in Ludington recently to hammer out an outline of a new lakewide restoration plan. Mike Toney's participated. He can brief the group about the process that is in place to produce a lakewide plan.

Action. Discussion item.

8. Milwaukee River walleye

Background (from agenda). 2004 is the last year of walleye stocking in the Milwaukee River under the present plan. Pradeep Hirethota and Tom Burzynski recently completed and circulated a report on this subject¹. We are committed to some form of public consultation process before making any further decisions regarding walleye stocking in the Milwaukee River. Brad Eggold asked for a Team discussion of how and when to pursue the public consultation.

Action. Discussion item.

9. Lake Michigan Technical Committee

Background (from agenda). The Lake Michigan Technical Committee will meet July 27-29 in Charlevoix. Mike Toney's, Brad Eggold, and Bill Horns will attend. A little discussion with the Team of the LMFT agenda might help us prepare for that meeting.

Action. Discussion item.

10. Yellow perch in Green Bay

Background (from agenda). The 2003 year class appears to be alive and well. The new updated GB yellow perch model appears to be up and running. Earlier this year Mark Marique spoke to the Natural Resources Board. He asked that the Department consider increasing the commercial harvest limit before the present sunset date of June 30, 2006. The NRB will expect a report on this subject later this summer, including a recommendation about the harvest limit.

Action. Discussion item. Survival of the 2003 year class appears good, although there are signs of reduced growth rates. This suggests that entry of the 2003 year class into the fishable stock may be delayed. An index of 2004 year class strength will not be available until mid October. A new SCAA model run incorporating 2004 data will not be possible until March of 2005. No recommendation was made regarding rule changes. Bill Horns will work with Justine to draft a letter from Mike Staggs to the NRB after this year's trawl catches are summarized in October.

11. Steelhead stream escapement study

Background (from agenda). Past discussions by the LMFT have pointed to the need to assess out-migration by stocked steelhead from tributary streams. To that end we funded a small project. This spring Steve Hogler conducted some preliminary sampling.

Action. Discussion item.

12. Cormorant study

Background (from agenda). The study of cormorant predation on yellow perch is off the ground. At last report, 150 birds had been shot for stomachs, and collections had been made from nesting areas. Overflights have provided bird counts. This project is funded by NRDA funds set aside by Darrell

¹ Hirethota, P.S. and T.E. Burzynski. 2004. An Evaluation of Walleye Population Restoration Efforts in the Lower Milwaukee River and Harbor, Wisconsin, 1995-2003. Wisconsin DNR. PUB-FH-510-2004.

Bazzell, and is being conducted by Sarah Meadows, a master's degree student working under the direction of Scott Craven and Stan Temple of the UW-Madison Wildlife Ecology Department. The USDA Wildlife Services program has provided essential assistance by providing the overflights and someone to shoot the birds.

Action. Discussion item.

13. LMFF

Background (from agenda). The Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum has decided to forego further meetings until asked by the Department to address a particular issue. There are still two vacancies on the Forum, as Gary Nault has never responded to Scott Hassett's letter, and Mark Nelson was not available.

Action. Discussion item. Bill Horns will review past recommendations to fill the vacancies. Team members may forward other suggestions to Bill.

14. Whitefish harvest limits

Background (from agenda). In recent years we have tried to review and, if needed, change the whitefish harvest limits every two years. We have not discussed those limits for at least two years. Paul Peeters has been working with John Netto to develop a new statistical catch at age model for whitefish.

Action. Discussion item.

15. Stocking quotas

Background. In view of recent stocking changes caused by budget shortfalls, fish-health issues, and low water, it is not clear what biologists should request.

Action. After discussion it was agreed that 1) quota requests for 2005-06 should not be changed, but may be changed at the annual production meeting and 2) for the 2006-07 stocking year, quotas should be discussed by the LMFT during or before March 2005.

16. GLFC sport fishing advisor

Background (from agenda): The Department must recommend a replacement for Mel Both as the Lake Michigan sport fishing advisor to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

Action. Discussion item.